

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 OUAGAD 00161 262122Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7502

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L OUAGADOUGOU 0161

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EASID, UV

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER IN TROUBLE

REF: OUAGADOUGOU 115, OUAGADOUGOU A-1

1. SUMMARY. PRIME MINISTER GERARD KANGO OUEDRAOGO IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE, AS POLITICAL FRONT HEATS UP IN PREPARATION FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED DECEMBER 1974. WHILE GOVERNMENT CHANGE COULD OCCUR IN NEAR FUTURE, IT LIKELY TAKE SOME TIME FOR CURRENT MANEUVERING TO WORK ITSELF OUT.

2. PRIME MINISTER'S CHRONIC PROBLEMS WITHIN OWN PARTY HAVE RECENTLY BECOME SERIOUS. ON JAN 21, FOR SECOND TIME IN A MONTH, OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF 21-MEMBER POLITICAL BUREAU OF RULING UDV-RDA PARTY VOTED AGAINST HIM. PREVIOUS VOTE (20-0-1) HAD SUPPORTED RE-ESTABLISHING POLITICAL RIGHTS OF EX-PRESIDENT MAURICE YAMEOGO; LATEST VOTE (15-2-4) WAS REPORTEDLY ON RESOLUTION CRITICIZING GOVERNMENT FOR LACK OF ACHIEVEMENT AND INDICATING LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN PRIME MINISTER. POLITICAL BUREAU THEN REPORTEDLY PROVISIONALLY SUSPEND-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 OUAGAD 00161 262122Z

ED GERARD FROM POSITION AS PRESIDENT OF PARTY. FOREING

MINISTER CONOMBO AND HEALTH MINISTER BARRAUD HAVE SUSPENDED THEIR PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR INSISTENCE ON CHANGE NOW.

3. GERARD IS FIGHTING BACK BY HAVING ISSUE REFERRED TO NATIONAL COUNCIL OF UDV-RDA PARTY, WHICH TO MEET JAN 30. WHILE GERARD WAS OUTVOTED IN POLITICAL BUREAU, WHICH DOMINATED BY OUAGADOUGOU-BASED ELEMENTS, HE HOPES RECOUP SITUATION IN LARGER NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOME 100 MEMBERS. COUNCIL DRAWS MEMBERS FROM ENTIRE COUNTRY, AND GERARD (WHO COMES FROM OUTLYING OUAHIGOUYA) IS MUCH STRONGER IN COUNTRYSIDE THAN IN OUAGADOUGOU. IF GERARD FAILS TO WIN IN NATIONAL COUNCIL, ISSUE WILL GO TO EVEN-LARGER NATIONAL CONGRESS OF PARTY.

4. LEADERS IN PARTY OPPOSITION TO GERARD IS AS USUAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT JOSEPH OUEDRAOGO, WHO IS ALSO SEC-GEN OF UDV-RDA PARTY. IN ADDITION MOVING AGAINST GERARD THROUGH PARTY, JOSEPH IS AGAIN ATTEMPTING GET ENOUGH SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENT (WHICH IS IN EXTRA-ORDINARY SESSION TO COMPLETE UNFINISHED BUSINESS) TO OVERTURN GERARD BY NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE. JOSEPH'S LAST TALLY SHOWED 37 VOTES FOR GERARD, WHICH APPEARS A ONLY ONE SHORT OF 38 VOTES (2/3 OF TOTAL ASSEMBLY) NEEDED TO OVERTURN PRIME MINISTER; HOWEVER OPTIMISTIC COUNT INCLUDES SEVERAL VOTES WHICH ARE UNSURE.

5. ANOTHER AVENUE OF ATTACK WAS TRIED JAN 24, WHEN SERIES OF POLITICIANS, REPRESENTING OPPOSITION PARTIES AND JOSEPH'S FACTION OF UDV-RDA, CALLED ON PRESIDENT LAMIZANA TO URGE HIM PRELACE PRESENT CABINET (AND PREMIEJ) WITH "GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION". INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL PARTIES, TO CONDUCT AFFAIRS THROUGH DECEMBER ELECTIONS.

6. EVENING SAME DAY, SUPREME COUNCIL OF ARMED FORCES MET AT PRESIDENCY TO DISCUSS SITUATION. ACCORDING TO PRESS, COUNCIL DECIDED ARMY WOULD OBSERVE STRICT NEUTRALITY IN PRESENT CRISIS.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 OUAGAD 00161 262122Z

7. COMMENT: THIS IS CLEARLY MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO GERARD SINCE HE BECAME PRIME MINISTER IN FEB 1970. OVERT DEFECTION OF CONOMBO AND BERRAUD, FOR FIRST TIME, IS BAD SIGN FOR HIM. CONOMBO (THIRD-RANKING POLITITICO IN UDV-RDA PARTY, AFTER GERARD AND JOSEPH, IS VERY CAGY POLITICIAN WHO WOULD NOT HAVE COME OUT INTO OPEN UNLESS CONFIDENT OF RESULT. BARRAUD IS ALMOST ONLY PROMINENT

UDV-RDA LEADER FROM NON-MOSSI WESTERN UPPER VOLTA.

8. REPORTED OUTCOME OF ARMY MEETING INDICATES PRESIDENT LAMIZANA HAS FOR PRESENT DECIDED AGAINST RETURN TO FULL MILITARY REGIME, EITHER LIKE 1966-70 OR "A LA DAHOMEY." DESPITE LAMIZANA'S KNOWN DISSASTIFACTION WITH POLITICIANS AND WITH GERARD, HE APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED CONTINUE HIS ALOOFNESS FROM POLITICS AND LET POLITICAL GAME BE PLAYED FOR YET A WHILE. WHEN GENERAL LAMIZANA DECIDES HE WANTS CHANGE, HE CAN HAVE IT RELATIVELY QUICKLY, EITHER BY SUPPORTING POLITICAL INITIATIVES SUCH AS THOSE MENTIONED ABOVE, OR BY RETURNING TO MILITARY REGIME. HIS PRESENT DECISION, HOWEVER, APPEARS TO FIT IN WELL WITH ASPIRATIONS OF THOSE MILITARY MEN WHO HOPE FOR SHIFT TO FULL MILITARY REGIME. MILITARY MOVE NOW WOULD APPEAR PREMATURE, FOR "POLITICIANS' POLITICS" HAS NOT YET FINISHED DISCUSSING ITSELF. HENCE, WITH EARLY DENOUEMENT OF COURSE POSSIBLE, LIKELY THAT SITUATION WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO WORK ITSELF OUT.-
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